

FOREIGN DEPARTMENT

IN CHARGE OF

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ORGANIZATION NOTES

THE VICTORIAN TRAINED NURSES' ASSOCIATION

THE first annual meeting of the Victorian Trained Nurses' Association was held in the Athenæum Hall, Melbourne, on October 13, and was attended by some two hundred nurses, looking fresh and dainty in indoor uniform. The annual report was presented by the secretary, Dr. W. A. Wood, who also announced that a paid secretary had been appointed and an office secured at Oxford Chambers, Bourke Street West.

The treasurer, Dr. Vance, congratulated the society on its strong financial position, and Dr. O'Sullivan, in moving a vote of thanks to the retiring council, said that the educated nurses of the present day were entitled to the fullest respect from everyone.

The poll for the election of officers and members of the council, 1902-3, was then declared, and it was decided that country sub-committees, of which there should not be more than three, should each have two representatives on the council.

Mr. Godfrey, chairman of the Melbourne Hospital Committee, addressed the meeting on the advantages of the association to the public. The great advantage to the public, he said, was that relatives of sick persons could employ a member of the association in perfect assurance that she was fully qualified, competent, and efficient.

Dr. G. K. Syme, who spoke regarding the advantages of the association to the medical profession, said that the imposition of untrained and unskilled nurses upon doctors and the public in cases of emergency would now be impossible.

Miss Glover (honorary secretary) observed that as forty-five country hospitals had become affiliated with the association, the day when untrained matrons pretended to teach nurses their work was now at an end.

The Victorian Association is, if we understand rightly, affiliated with the Australasian Trained Nurses' Association.

THE SOCIETY OF THE RED CROSS IN GERMANY

THE Red Cross Association of Germany is one of the most thoroughly organized societies in the world, and perfectly developed in all its details.

It is like an enormous tree, the trunk of which is composed of the highest military officials, headed by the Emperor and Empress, and the branches of which are the local societies existing in almost every German city or town.

At the annual meeting of the nursing societies of the Red Cross in Germany, held at Munich last November, about twenty-four mother-houses were

represented. These "mother-houses" are unlike any secular nurses' training-schools in America, being planned somewhat on the lines of the religious sisterhood; that is, they undertake to train their nurses and to give them a home and provide for them throughout life if the nurses so desire. They send them wherever their services may be needed, give them home and board and uniform, with a little pay, look after them in sickness, and in old age give them pensions or establish old-age homes for them. Comparatively few hospitals in Germany conduct their own training-schools. Instead, they apply to one of the "mother-houses" for as many nurses as they need, paying the mother-house for the services of the nurses. This is why one finds, for instance, in the old Charity Hospital in Berlin, nursing deaconesses and nursing sisters from four or five different schools, each under control of a head nurse from her own school. It is computed that two-thirds of all the nursing work of Germany is in the hands of religious societies, largely Protestant, and the census of 1900 gave the number of women nurses in Germany as thirty-eight thousand. An interesting feature of the annual meeting of the Red Cross societies mentioned above was a paper read by the superintendent of the Bavarian branch, Fräulein von Wallmenich, in which she recounted the duties and responsibilities of a nursing matron and her need for a broad education, and described a training-school established in Munich for hospital matrons which seems to be quite similar in its purpose to our course in hospital economics. The course lasts for one year, and comprises lectures on ethics, pedagogy, hospital administration, insurance and poor-law (Germany has a national law compelling old-age and sickness insurance of working-people), elementary architecture, gardening, hygiene, electro-therapeutics, bookkeeping, French and English, chemistry of foods, housekeeping, and cooking,—certainly a most varied and broadening curriculum for a hospital head, and exceedingly suggestive as showing how similar to our own are the problems of nurses in other countries. One class has finished this course.

The monthly paper, *Unter dem roten Kreuz*, is issued by the women's organizations devoting themselves to nursing in the colonies, and gives the reports and activities of the various branches, with many interesting details of the hospital work carried on under their auspices. The December number shows groups of nurses working in Dar-es-Salaam, in Tanga, in Kamerun, in Togo, in Windhoek, in Swakopmund, and Keetmanshoop in Africa, and still another in China.

The nurses are supported by the home societies, who take the warmest interest in them, sending them Christmas boxes, new uniforms, little comforts for their rooms and living quarters, and generally looking after them. Some of the letters from the sisters published in *Unter dem roten Kreuz* show that their work is arduous and varied.

Sister Hermine Seiff writes from Keetmanshoop:

"I have had an extraordinary amount to do lately, as I had to cook for eighteen people. The only 'boy' I had to carry water, chop wood, wash dishes, etc., fell sick, and the substitutes changed every couple of days, as no one liked so 'frightfully much work.' Fortunately, now I have an excellent woman, although, to be sure, she speaks not one word either of German or Dutch, and two prisoners carry the wood and the water.

"The water question is the most important one here, as every drop must be carried, not only for cooking and dish-washing, but for laundry as well."

Later she writes:

"My duties have changed lately, as I have had to take charge of the apothecary's department, as well as of the laundry for the hospital. A soldier assists in the kitchen. Whether this arrangement lasts will depend on the approval of the government. Our field surgeon arranged it so temporarily, as, on account of sickness and changes in the service, the work of these departments was unsatisfactory to him.

"As this drug department not only dispenses medicines and surgical supplies to the hospital and settlement here, but also to several points south, there is quite a good deal to do. Here my early training stands me in good stead, as in the small hospital where I was trained we learned to make the different mixtures, ointments, and solutions, whereas in a large hospital such work does not make part of the nurse's training."

Another nurse in Windhoek conducts a home for children, with kindergarten, sewing-, and knitting-classes, etc.

SCHOOL BOARD NURSES

THE *British Medical Journal* of recent date has the following paragraph in regard to the school nurses:

"For the past year a nurse has been employed under the direction of the medical officers of the London School Board to visit certain schools and draw the teachers' attention to the personal condition of their pupils in regard to general cleanliness, pediculosis, and skin eruptions. In neglected cases she visits homes and advises the parents to secure medical advice, etc. She is not supposed to carry out any treatment, but is regarded as a sanitary missionary analogous to the inspectors employed by health boards, and has to report weekly to the medical department, calling attention to any details of cleanliness, washing arrangements, and other school conditions which may form a basis for further inquiry if necessary. The experiment has been regarded as such a success that more nurses are now to be employed. The advertisement for these has attracted some attention and has given rise to a certain amount of misunderstanding, owing to the way in which it is expressed. According to this advertisement the nurses are required to visit the schools and to report on the presence of ring-worm, and they are required to have had experience in skin diseases, thus suggesting that in the minds of the board these nurses are competent to diagnose cases of ring-worm, although, as is well known, this is beyond the capacity of a nurse except in certain well-marked cases. We think the wording of the advertisement is much to be regretted, as the nurses applying under this circular may be encouraged by it to go out of their proper sphere and regard themselves as what they are not,—viz., experts in the diagnosis and perhaps in the treatment of skin diseases. We have a good deal of sympathy with the object of the board in employing nurses, as we feel sure that much good may be done by their assistance, but we should much regret seeing any friction arise with the medical profession. This can only be avoided by keeping them distinctly to such duties as are described in the first part of this paragraph and by checking any tendency on their part to regard themselves as competent to diagnose or treat diseases."

Upon reading this paragraph we are reminded of the work of the school nurse in New York City; there she works directly under the orders of the physician—certainly a more satisfactory and definite way. We, however, contend with emphasis that the school nurse ought to be rather more than a mis-

sionary merely. The medical inspector should give her orders for the *definite application of treatment* in many of the school cases, as we all know that the actual cleansing and application of medicaments and bandages does the work in a short time, where prescriptions followed by the mother's futile attempts leave the child for weeks uncured of some simple ailment. We cordially agree that the nurse should not diagnose or prescribe; nevertheless, we are inclined to think—sub-rosa and with modesty—that the nurse who cannot learn to tell a ring-worm when she sees it, except in a rare instance, would hardly know a little woolly dog if it came in her way.

The London School Board is also conducting a thorough examination of the eyesight of the pupils, with the result of finding serious defects of vision in about eight per cent. of boys and eleven of girls. Another excellent piece of work of the London School Board is the recently undertaken one of securing from the Parks Commission sites on parks and open spaces which may be used for convalescent homes for children.

School inspection by medical officers is carried on in a number of German, French, Belgian, and Swiss towns; none, however, have yet added the school nurse.

LETTERS

ANOTHER WORD FROM MRS. TSILKA

MRS. TSILKA writes to Miss Maxwell, from Kortechna:

"My adventures with the brigands were so very dreadful—very fearful; but, thank God! that is all past, and to-day I am sitting down in a very bright, cheerful room, with my husband playing with Ellenchin, and I comfortably writing this. You know, sometimes it seems so hard for anybody to live in this country that many times we have been about ready to run to America. This autumn some money was sent us from America to build a dormitory for the girls. The necessary permit for the building was obtained. Afterwards, when about half through, the government stopped us. All the material was left exposed to the weather. It was done just to give us trouble, for the government does not want improvements. Besides that, the Greek Catholic Bishop persecuted us; they do not wish to see Protestantism triumph. Besides these troubles, brigands are all around us, and I can't help shiver at any gunshot in the night. If we ever come to America, it won't be until next summer. I am afraid to expose my darling to any more dangers."

ITEMS

THE last report of the League of St. John's House Nurses, London, contains several items of general interest, viz.:

"Though yet in its early youth, the league has done some good work. The self-instruction scheme suggested by one of the members has been responded to, the subjects chosen being botany, literature, and French. French evidently has the preference, as so many nurses have felt the need of a knowledge of it in private nursing, not only abroad, but also often at home.

"Three very good collections of flowers were sent in for inspection by members of the botany group.

"The magazine published half-yearly under the title of *St. John's House*